

## The Times They Are a-Changin'

Ronald Rudin, Acting Chair

Historians are trained to study change, which is a good thing considering the profound changes that the Concordia History Department has undergone. Roughly half of the department's nineteen faculty members have been hired since 2001. Some colleagues have retired, including John Hill and Graeme Decarie, who left during the past year, while a whole new crew has arrived, including in the past year, Vincent Carey, Rachel Berger and Wilson Jacob, who are featured elsewhere in this newsletter. The arrival of newcomers will continue since we are slated this year to hire new faculty in the history of imperialism and in the history of East Asia. We also hope to fill a position for a Canada Research Chair in the History of Genocide. This will be our second Canada Research Chair, and there are few history departments in Canada of our size that can make such a claim.

In building this new department, we have tried to construct one that focuses on four areas of research and teaching strength: Cultural History; Gender and Sexuality; Public History; Transnational and International history. Our strategy for building the department also reflects our commitment to balancing coverage of North American history, European history and, for lack of a better term, studies in the histories of societies and civilizations elsewhere in the world. Over a third of the current faculty has some research interest in "non-western" topics, a figure likely to grow with the hiring to come in the year ahead.

The changes don't stop there, however. In order to accommodate, our growing number of faculty

and students, the Department will soon be moving to new and much larger facilities, which will include a state-of-the-art Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling to be operated by Elena Razlogova and Steven High, the latter our Canada Research Chair in Public History. These new facilities will allow students to be trained in the collection of oral histories and in the production of digital video and audio. The Centre will be the first of its kind in Canada.

There are also a number of changes in the administration of the department. After two years of stellar service as Chair, Graham Carr has moved on to become the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies for the Faculty of Arts and Science. While Graham's leadership will be sorely missed, we also take pride in the fact that what has happened within the department has been recognized more widely in the university.

As for me, I agreed to serve as chair this year, in part, because Mary Vipond agreed to act as associate chair with special responsibility for our move. While taking on her new responsibilities, Mary has given up her role as the founding editor of *TimeLines*. Over the past 4 years, she gave the newsletter a distinctive style. Her mantle has now been taken up by Alison Rowley, who begins her time as editor with this issue. She and Donna Whittaker have given the newsletter a new look, which provides further evidence of how change is the operative word in the life of the Concordia History Department.



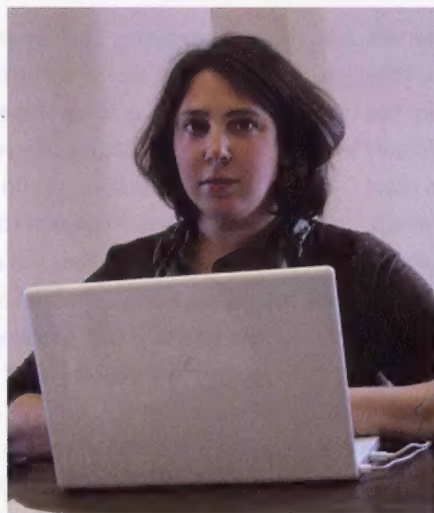
# Introducing Our Newest Members

*We are once again in the enviable position of introducing our newest faculty members.*

*Joining us this year are Rachel Berger, specializing in South Asian history, Vincent Carey, our Irish historian, and Wilson Jacob, our new Middle Eastern specialist.*

## Rachel Berger

My interest in India began rather haphazardly: in my last year of Liberal Arts at Marianopolis College, a program centred on the development of Western Civilisation, I had the great fortune of taking a class with a professor who placed the development of the West within its global context. I spent a few months reading about the history of India and was hooked. While the scope of the content was fascinating to me, the breadth of scholarship and the nature of the debates about 'what happened' equally drew



me in. The next year I enrolled as an honours student in History here at Concordia and filled up my schedule with a combo of Asian history courses and those focusing on gender and sexuality. I was supported at Concordia by professors who challenged me, both within the context of the classroom and individually as well, and by an engaged and healthily competitive peer group. In the summer of 1999, I was accepted into a program to study development in India, which provided me, as a young historian, with a wonderful sense of the relevance of historical debates to contemporary development strategies. At the end of my second year I was hired as a research assistant on a project dealing with human rights in the context of reproductive technology trials in South Asia, and was fortunate enough to be able to return to India to do research and to work on issues of family planning as a researcher and health organizer (though I took lots of time off to travel around as well).

Upon graduation, I was granted a fellowship at the University of Toronto to begin graduate work

in South Asian history, where I was introduced to the world of critical and post-colonial theory.

I decided to attempt a contextualisation of my work on medicine within a broader historical context, beginning with a study of reproduction and sexuality in its global and local context in the 1930s and 1940s. I wrote an MA thesis on Margaret Sanger's work with the All India Women's Council, looking at the meaning of transnational organizing in the context of late colonial rule. After a year, I left Toronto for the University of Cambridge where I undertook a rigorous MPhil in Hindi language and

literature, and began research in vernacular languages in an attempt to get a sense of the popular construction of the issues I studied. In so doing, I came across a world of literature that addressed issues of medicine in society. I noticed that central to these discussions were debates about the appropriateness of 'foreign' versus 'indigenous' medicine for Indian bodies. These debates were sites where questions of nationalism, identity and belonging were being negotiated, and gave great insight into popular and official perspectives on the constitution of the Indian nation, as well as imaginings of independent India. Thus, my dissertation topic was born, and I spent several years working on the history of Ayurveda and popular culture in colonial North India. My research is beginning to move away from this topic towards broader ones, but I continue to focus on the importance of medicine and biopolitics to larger questions about national identity.

I'm thrilled to be back at Concordia and in my hometown of Montreal, surrounded by wonderful colleagues and students!



# Newest Members cont'd.

## Vincent Carey

*I ndán na nGall gealltar linn  
Gaoidhill d'ionnarba a hÉirinn  
Goill do shraoineadh tar sail sair  
I ndán na nGaoidheal gealltar*

[In poetry for the foreigner we promise that the Gael [Irish] shall be banished from Ireland, in poetry for the Gaels we promise that the foreigner shall be routed across the sea]

Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dalaigh's fifteenth-century rather cynical assessment of his profession begs the perennial question for

whom does the poet write? While Ó Dalaigh's answer is clear, we write for whoever pays the bills, the question is still one that should concern all writers, historians included. For whom do we interpret the past and why, by extension, do we become historians?

As for myself, I know how I got here but am increasingly concerned with the professional why? I grew up in a community steeped in history. I played as a child in the ruins of medieval castles and delighted in the stories of my area's troubled past as told to me by my older relatives and their friends. I loved "history" with a passion that is until I went to high school. There it was rote learning of dates, battles treaties and constitutions. I found myself drawn more to Gaelic and English poetry. When I went to university, and as the first of my family to do so accompanied by intense expectation of economic success, I confounded them all with my desire to study Gaelic literature. Though it is a little bit of a cliché, this all changed when I encountered a wonderful undergraduate teacher in a Renaissance

Europe class. The rest as they say is "history", to resort to another chestnut. For my undergrad and then M.A. thesis, I specialized in Gaelic reactions to English colonization schemes.



It wasn't until I came to New York to pursue my Ph.D. that my passion for early modern Europe was allowed to blossom. Combining the two worlds, i.e. the study of Ireland in the early modern European context, became my "mission". Luckily I eventually found academic employment, found I loved teaching, and was also able to pursue my varied scholarly interests. I was able to produce studies that range through Humanism, Gaelic poetry, noble life and, more recently, religious

persecution. It was through an immersion in the latter subject, however, that a major shift occurred in my professional and writing life. Over the course of two years (2002-2004) I had the opportunity to work on a major exhibit on persecution and tolerance in early modern Europe at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC. Over this extended period we planned and mounted the exhibit, wrote and edited a combined catalogue and collection of essays, spoke to visitor, teacher and student groups. Giving lectures on this contemporary and relevant subject to the general public was very fulfilling. The visitors' book and press reaction suggested that we had impacted people deeply. This experience and reaction changed my professional life and brought me to question the historian and teacher's task.

I am delighted to be at Concordia and look forward to my development here as a teacher and student of history. I may even come to resolving my dilemma as to why and for whom I write?



# Newest Members cont'd.

## Wilson Jacob

Standing at a precipice, I think to myself: "do I defy family expectations and follow my dreams, or, do I take the path of least resistance?"

An inaccurate metaphor, I hear. Crossroads? From the perspective of an outsider perhaps.

But, falling is the overwhelming feeling I have had since choosing to follow those dreams.

It may appear strange that I am speaking of my decision to study history. It might be queried how such a benign issue could become the source of existential dilemmas. Yet, as

a product of the political-economic vagaries of our postcolonial era, which placed new Indians in Oklahoma ("Land of the Red Man," once "Indian" Territory, located above Texas) in the final decades of the last century, it was indeed an anomalous desire to possess. More specifically, for working-class immigrants, whose vision of success was significantly shaped by the discourse of "the American Dream," a future could only be as bright as the square footage of one's new home(s). As we all know, a professor's salary does not convert well into measurements of surface area. Hence, aspiring to a career in academia appeared as a non-sensical goal when seen through my parents' particular lenses.

The approach I have taken to studying the past is very much linked to the conditions in which I came to history as an epistemology and a vocation. In their disavowal of historical study as a legitimate profession, my parents unwittingly gave me another perspective onto the meaning, place, and significance of the

past and its multiple deployments. They taught me through their lived relationship to the past—as the bearer of tradition that was always already fixed—how to think the gap between History as a complex disciplinary formation

and history as zones of incomplete and radically heterogeneous experience. However, as a historian I continue to grapple with the formulation of a proper modality for apprehending that in-between space when the context is shifted to a colonial one, in which that very space marks the erasure and rewriting of other histories.

Falling can signify hope as well as despair, although it tends to be understood as a movement from good to bad. In my case, it

was certainly a fall from grace when I chose to go against my parents' wishes. However, the resulting cost serves as a constant reminder of how significant the decision was and how precious the outcome. The fall is only bad when one anticipates hitting bottom. I do not regret the decision I made in that anxious moment at the precipice; for, embracing the fall itself opened the way for many unanticipated surprises. In falling, I've traveled to unfamiliar parts and come back with visions of self, of other, of the real and the fantastic, of the present and the past; the mysteries of which, may never be fully unlocked. Yet, the quest is a magnificent thing in itself. It is through the initial loss of ground, however, that the quest itself becomes a beginning and an end. So the magic of that falling feeling is not adequately figured through the linear image of two divergent paths. The fall contains within it pasts, presents, and futures and falling might just open a window onto other times both near and far.





# Goodbye, Graeme...

*This August, after a teaching career that spanned forty-plus years, thirty-one of them spent here at Concordia, Graeme Decarie retired and moved away from Montreal. The following short retrospective of his career is written by his long-time colleague, Mary Vipond.*

Graeme Decarie joined the History Department of Loyola College in the fall of 1971. He was that rare creature in our department, a born-and-bred Montrealer.

Moreover, he was a prototypical graduate of Sir George Williams (B.A. 1960), having grown up in a modest home in the North End and having worked for a number of years as a clerk and for the YMCA before entering university. Graeme taught high school for the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal until 1963, when he

returned to university to gain his M.A. at Acadia University (1965). While working on his Ph.D. at Queen's University (completed in 1972) he taught for three years in Prince Edward Island until former chair Bill Akin met him at a poker game during the summer of 1971 and lured him to Loyola. Graeme also taught briefly at Shue Yan College in Hong Kong and at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. He retired from Concordia on 31 August 2006 after a total of almost forty-five years of teaching.

Graeme's classroom teaching was distinguished by his ability to attract and captivate large numbers of students in courses such as the Canadian survey and the History of Recreation and Leisure, as well as upper-level courses on the history of war. His teaching evaluations were always very good, but he refused to accept their verdict. Graeme was ever the informed pedagogical sceptic, and barraged the departmental and university administrations with memos about curriculum, teaching and evaluation based on wide knowledge and great

passion. He was also a most compassionate teacher, and had a wide following of students who sought his wise advice.



Graeme also did much more than his fair share of administrative work, most notably as Chair of the History Department from 1986 to 1994, as Director of the Canadian Studies Program at Concordia, as a Fellow of the School of Community and Public Affairs, as co-director of the Centre for the Study of Anglophone Quebec, and as a member of committees too numerous to mention.

It was probably for his role outside the University that Graeme was best known, however. He wrote popular historical articles on topics ranging from Jacques Cartier to early bicycling and of course temperance (the subject of his Ph.D. dissertation), and acted as a consultant for several historical films, as well as for the *Reader's Digest*. He frequently reviewed books for newspapers and popular magazines, and tried his hand at fiction as well. For many years he was a regular editorialist and commentator on CBC and later CJAD radio, as well as on CBC-TV's "Midday" and "The Journal." At one point Graeme averaged over one hundred speaking engagements a year, to groups ranging from senior citizens to private school headmasters to American dermatologists. He was (and is) adept at presenting serious historical insights and explanations to diverse public audiences while simultaneously engaging and entertaining them. In so doing he extended the university's mission far beyond the physical confines in which we normally teach and work.



# Goodbye, Graeme cont'd

Graeme's public activities also extended to involvement in community and political causes. In 1970-71 he was the leader of the Prince Edward Island NDP; in the 1980s and early 1990s he was very active in Alliance Quebec, including a stint as Chair of the organization's Board of Directors and another on its Provincial Advisory Council. Special mention must be made of his active intervention in the Senate Sub-Committee hearings on the controversial television series "The Valour and the Horror" in 1995, when Graeme was one of the few Canadian historians who supported the work of the filmmakers.

Graeme and his family have retired to rural New Brunswick, where he is currently preoccupied with renovations and catching up with his reading. We imagine that he will soon be speaking and writing again, however, and continuing to pursue his mission of reaching out to the general public and sharing with citizens of all walks of life his fascination with the relevance of history in these perilous times.

- Mary Vipond

## Nora Jaffary – Winner of a FQRSC Grant

In April 2006, I learned that the Nouveaux Chercheurs program of the Fonds Québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC) would support my new research project "Childbirth and Birth Control in Mexico, 1750-1850." This project focuses on the unexplored history of women's medical and maternal experiences during Mexico's transition from a Spanish colony to a modern nation. This era is often conceptualized as a period of progress and scientific development in Mexico. I wish to examine whether these changes advanced the accessibility and quality of services available to women. By studying medical tracts, legal codes, institutional records of the medical profession, and inquisitorial and criminal trials, I will reconstruct the methods women used both to give birth and prevent conception in this period. My study will also detail the changes in healthcare personnel

across this time period and will track the transformations Mexico experienced during modernization in terms of popular, political, and religious attitudes to childbirth and birth control.

FQRSC has granted me \$29,140 (distributed between 2006 and 2009) which I will use for archival research trips to Spain, Mexico, and various repositories in the United States, primary source material acquisition, hiring graduate students, and equipment purchase. I began research this summer when I traveled to the Newberry library in Chicago to examine a number of colonial and nineteenth-century medical treatises and to the Archivo de Indias in Seville, Spain, I collected evidence about notices about unusual (monstrous or multiple) births in New Spain published in the *Gazeta de México*, the first news periodical published in the Viceroyalty.



# Oral History at Concordia

These are exciting times for the growing community of oral historians at Concordia. Thanks to a \$350,000 grant from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) and Quebec's Ministry of Education, our department is now home to Canada's first digital oral history lab. Students, faculty, and community affiliates have access to the latest digital recording devices as well as ten custom-built computers able to handle digital video. In addition, once the department moves into the newly renovated space on the tenth floor, the CFI grant will be paying for a state-of-the-art video conferencing room (where the world's leading experts can be beamed in), an interview studio, video editing rooms, and a "smart room" equipped with 16 computer work stations for oral history training workshops and other uses.

Together with a large grant awarded to Elena Razlogova for a digital history lab and dedicated server, the new "Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling" will be a facility dedicated to providing access to high quality digital audio and video that turn formerly unwieldy text-based interviews into searchable, community-accessible databases. It will also be able to disseminate research results, and oral history video, to the public in new ways including videos, DVD's, CD-ROMs and on-line applications. The aim is to create a strong and vibrant research space where technological and methodological experimentation are encouraged.

The CFI grant is also paying for the construction of searchable databases of videotaped oral history interviews – another

first in Canada. New digital tools have recently appeared that offer direct access to the audio and video content of oral history collections. The broader implications of these changes to the theory and practice of oral history are many. First, and foremost, digital oral history promises a move away from transcription. In former times, recorded oral interviews were quickly transcribed and the original audio or visual source was either set aside or discarded altogether. With the loss of the orality of the source at such an early stage, the power of oral history to put a face and a name to history was muted. Analogue audio and visual cassettes were ponderous to use and, as a result, underutilized. Museums and archives across Canada have oral history collections that collect dust on shelves or in cabinets. Digital technologies are opening up new non-linear ways to access and analyze the audio or video source directly. In the creation of searchable databases of recorded life stories and oral histories, the *Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling* will operate on this "software frontier".

Oral history at Concordia is not just technology-driven. We now have our first four graduate interns (Krissy O'Hare, Rob Shields, Stephen MacPherson and Stan Lawlor), and our first "Visiting Oral Historian" – Frauke Brammer from the Free University of Berlin. We are also organizing training workshops and guest lectures throughout the year.

- Steven High

## Upcoming Oral History Events

"Digital History: An Introduction," presented by Elena Razlogova, October 27, 2006.

"The Ethics of Doing Oral History," presented by Kristen O'Hare, November 3, 2006.

For more information or to register, please contact Kristen O'Hare at [k\\_ohare@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:k_ohare@alcor.concordia.ca).



# A New Book to Announce: Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London

Editor: Alison Rowley  
Editorial Assistant:  
Donna Whittaker



Drawing from the archives of late medieval London, I examine in *Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London* how marital and sexual relationships were woven into the fabric of late medieval London culture. A significant aspect of my argument is that old truism of feminist thinking, "the personal is political." Marriage was a religious union, one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church, imbued with deep spiritual significance. The marital unit of the husband and wife was also the central core of the household, the fundamental social, political, and economic unit of medieval society. Marriages created political alliances at all levels from the arena of international politics to the local neighbourhood; marriages allowed the transfer of property, goods, and labour from one family to another; marriages initiated or deepened ties of friendship and love not only between the couple but also

among the couple's family and friends; marriages helped forge gender identities, the husband's and wife's roles forming two of the main constituents of conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity. Sexual relationships outside marriage (in a culture of "compulsory heterosexuality") were, if anything, more complicated: medieval Londoners variously saw them as irrelevant, as deeply damaging to society and to the body politic, as economically productive or as wasteful of resources, as mainly due to female seduction or to male lustfulness. This book studies both how people went about forming marital and sexual relationships and how other people - parents, relatives, friends, neighbours, civic officials, parish priests, ecclesiastical judges - sought to influence, control, or prevent them. I argue that bonds of marriage and sex were simultaneously intimate, deeply personal ties and matters of public concern, subject to intervention by everyone from a woman's or man's family, friends, and employers to the mayor of London himself. By focusing on a particular time and place - London in the second half of the fifteenth century - I hope with the book not only to elucidate the culture and politics of England's metropolitan center, but also to contribute more generally to our understanding of the social mechanisms through which pre-modern European people negotiated their lives.

- Shannon McSheffrey



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## Department Colloquium Schedule

All talks will take place at noon in the history dept seminar room:

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|---------------------|--|
| <b>24 November:</b> | Elena Razlogova, Professor, "Hearing Like a Citizen of a Cold War State: Popular Music and Social Imagination in the United States and the Soviet Union" |
| <b>12 January:</b>  | Neil Caplan, Professor, Vanier College and Part-time instructor, "From Moshe Sharett's Diary: The Painful Fall of an Israeli Politician, 1953-57"        |
| <b>2 March:</b>     | Vincent Carey, Professor, "Ireland and the Black Legend"   |
| <b>13 April:</b>    | David Randall, Post-Doctoral Fellow, "Ancient Ethos, Medieval Poetics, and the Early Modern Public Sphere"   |